

Washington, DC – Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore) today issued the following statement in response to remarks made by President Felipe Calderon, President of Mexico, before a joint session of Congress:

“I’ve had an opportunity to attend any number of joint sessions of Congress, but the presentation of President Felipe Calderon was one of the most remarkable I’ve ever seen.

“It was an impressive balance between the hope and opportunity imbedded in the relationship between our two countries and the stark realities that while we are joined at the hip for good, we also are chained together by mutual problems. The president was very forthright in laying out, in an unvarnished fashion, the problems we share.

“The fact that he has the largest drug market in the world on his border – one that the United States cannot control – and a broken immigration system, is daunting. While acknowledging the challenges of our right to establish and protect our own borders and immigration policy, Calderon called out the destructive and inherently discriminatory practice imbedded in the Arizona law.

“The flow of high powered weapons into his country arming the drug lords was presented in a stark, unvarnished fashion. When he called for re-imposition of the assault weapons ban, it was interesting to see the vast majority of people rise to their feet, but we were not joined by any Republicans as I surveyed the 45 or so who were in attendance.

“President Calderon had other messages for American lawmakers. The strong regulations they had in place in Mexico meant that despite the worst economic downturn in their history, there were no government funds bailing out Mexican banks last year. And his policies are clearly ones that are a challenge at home, for which the drug cartels are extracting a horrible price on government, law enforcement, and innocent civilians alike.

“There is probably no more important relationship in the world than the one between the United States and Mexico. For all our talk of how the U.S. and China are linked, having a nation of over 100 million immediately on our southern border, our second largest recipient of American goods and the place of origin of the fastest growing segment of our population, all testify to this fact.

“Unless we are able to get these policies and practices right, both countries are doomed to serious future problems, and more failure than we would like. The partnership, the policies and the practices aligned can result in opportunities in Mexico that will keep Mexicans in their cities and villages with their families, while the corrosive impact of the drug trade will be minimized and hopefully someday eliminated.

“All in all, it was an impressive and thought provoking speech. Watching the reactions of the members of Congress told me a great deal more about the United States than it did about Mexico.”